

## Tips to Informal Caregivers on Giving Personal Care

### **Bathing and Grooming**

The purposes for giving a bath in bed are:

- to cleanse and refresh the person, thereby increasing self-esteem;
- to eliminate skin waste and help prevent infection;
- to aid in stimulating circulation;
- to provide passive and active exercise.

How often a bath is given depends upon such factors as the physical condition, age and skin type of the person. Older people have less oil and perspiration. Therefore, a daily bath with soap may not be desirable.

Washing the rectum, genitals and armpits may be all that is needed. A cool sponge bath may be needed if the person perspires profusely.

A few points to follow in bathing a person:

- Choose a bath time convenient for the family and the person;
- Make sure the room is warm and equipment organized;
- Keep the person warm with a sheet or blanket while bathing;
- Place a towel under the part being washed to keep the bed dry;
- Change water when soiled, soapy or cool;
- Test water temperature on the inner wrist to make sure it is not too hot;
- Provide as much privacy as possible for the person;
- Assess the condition of the person as he is bathed. Note skin changes;
- Use soap sparingly;
- Encourage the person to participate in bathing. In doing so, he gets some exercise and develops security in doing for himself.

**Procedure:**

- Explain what will be done and the reasons for the various techniques.
- Place a cover over the top cover to be used as a bath blanket. A bath blanket can be made by sewing several large towels together. Slide the top covers from under the bath blanket. Help to remove the bed clothes as needed.
- Place a towel under the person's head.
- Wrap the washcloth around the fingers and palm, anchoring it with the thumb; fold over the part extending beyond the fingers and tuck under at the bottom edge of the cloth. (This eliminates dangling ends which may be uncomfortable to the individual.)
- Wash eyes with clear water, cleansing from inner corner of the eye to the outer part of the eye (as the normal flow of tears is from the outer to the inner part of the eyes), using opposite corners of the cloth for each eye.
- Wash the face from midline outward using a firm but gentle motion. Use clear water, unless the skin is oily. Some people prefer creams for cleansing.
- Wash, rinse and dry ears.
- Place a towel under the arm and another towel near the hand and the basin.
- Lower the person's hand into the basin. Allow it to soak as the arm is being washed.
- Wash and rinse the other arm and soak hand, drying carefully, especially between the fingers. Push cuticles back and clean under the nails.
- Put towel over the chest and abdomen. Bring bath cover down to thighs.
- Wash, rinse and dry neck, chest and abdomen. Cover chest and abdomen.
- Remove the bath cover to expose the leg and place towel under the leg.
- Place a towel under the basin near the foot.
- Lower foot into the basin to soak. This will help soften the nails and skin.
- Wash, rinse and dry leg.
- Repeat above steps for other leg.
- Dry carefully between the toes.
- Observe feet and use pumice stone or emery board to smooth callouses.
- Clean under the nails.

- Turn the person on the side. Drape a towel around the back and buttocks.
- Tuck the towel along under his buttocks and shoulders.
- Wash, rinse and dry his back and buttocks. Cover his back.
- Use fresh water for genitals.
- Teach the person to wash carefully between the buttocks and the genitals. Rinse and dry thoroughly. Remind the female to wash from the front to the back to avoid bringing germs from the rectal area to the vagina and bladder. If the person is unable to wash his buttocks and genitals, the caregiver should complete this part of the bath for him.
- Apply body lotion or powder, as desired.
- File or clip nails cautiously and dispose of clippings into paper towel.
- Persons with a urinary catheter or an ostomy should be taught to wash carefully.

*The above statements are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. You should always consult with your physician about any health and lifestyle concerns or issues you may have.*